

10-SEP-B-1

LAUNCH THE ECUADOR MOBILE SURGICAL MISSION TO PALMAR

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2 Takeoff on the second Ecuadorian mobile surgical mission this year: through rigorous security screening at DCA to ATL to a meeting on the plane with Judy Sudmeier, to arrival at Quito and check in at Hotel Merkur Alameda in Ecuador

3 A day in transit—in a near-comedy of errors in directing local drivers to destinations I have never been in a mid-day gracious hosting at “Florida” accommodation of Edgar Rodas and a special driver to the long road trip through the spectacular Parque Nacional de Cajas (14,000 feet) to the coastal Palmar site of our mission and my accommodation on the broad beachfront of the Pacific surf on Palmar sands.

4 The start of our surgical series in Palmar on the Pacific beach in Ecuador at 02* 01.43 S and 080* 43.31 W on what is our local official first day of Spring—Equinox begins with a walk on the broad beaches under frigate birds over the fishing fleet of Palmar

5 Hernia repair day follows Lap Chole Day in the truck as we perform a second full day of our mobile surgical mission in Palmar on the Pacific Beach

6 From the Pacific Beach at Palmar (elevation two meters) through the Continental Divide in the Andean Parque Nacional de Cajas (elevation 3,985 meters) to the Cuenca Valley, a thousand meters lower to start up pre-dawn toward the peak of Cotopaxi—the stunning snow cone I had seen and photographed twice as I have flown from Quito to Cuenca to the Florida guest cottage of the Rodas’ home in their compound

7 Launch for the highest ice covered summits of the Andes as we attack Cotopaxi: The way to the top along the “Panavial” including campesinos, blue hearts painted on roadway, Palmira sandhills, and the oldest church in Ecuador on our way to a village where we rent additional climbing gear; a serious mountain—Cotopaxi, on the “Ruta des Volcans”—5,897 meters—an “Equatorial Glacier!”

8 Return overnight from Quito after Barbecue reception by the Rodas family compound, then stormy weather through ATL and DCA to return to rainy Derwood as major trees are crashing as I am unpacking and regrouping

9 Judy Sudmeier’s response to her Ecuador experience

10-SEP-B-2

**TAKEOFF ON THE SECOND ECUADORIAN MOBILE SURGICAL
MISSION THIS YEAR**

September 19, 2010

LAST MINUTE RUSH ON “COLOR PICTURES SIGNATURE”

I got immersed in technoglitches before departure, only a few of them of my own making. I had just received the color signature suggested images from only the most recent discs from a limited amount of places from the Design Editor at Greenleaf, looking for “compelling” photos, even if to my eye they do not tell a story. She had skipped most all of the work and almost all of the people mentioned in the book, and the deadline is supposed to be closest for the photos that will be scattered throughout the book in B & W in the chapters in which the incident is portrayed or the names of people described. But even though those are supposed to be selected and inserted in the text design which should be due in a few days—I will be gone and I did not see any of those coming along at this time but a short changed group of color pics for the central signature of 16 pages and 32 pictures, which is not due until later. Nonetheless, I had to deal with only what I have so I put on an effort to edit and write captions far into the night and all Saturday morning. I could not do it continuously since the laptop would crash and erase much of what I had done. I also could not do it effectively in the “Sticky Note” application of the pdf files because it would overlap the photo, obscuring its number and often assigning it to some other picture—and then again the crashing did not help.

I did 110 captions individually saved each of the 110 times to prevent losing them all in Word, then wrote a cover note and packed it all over to the library. I got an access easily to a computer there—that may have been my first clue—then worked for an hour trying to even access my account. Finally I went to the desk and said I could not get any access to any internet server, and she said “nobody can—the whole of Montgomery County Library system is down and we cannot raise anybody since we would do that by the computer.” So, I am out of business. I drove over to Diane Downing’s house and use her painfully slow dial up access to send out a note under her name on her server so I hope that it is not ignored, since I have to get these on to Patty and to Greenleaf. If I have so much trouble here in the well-wired world, imagine what trying to clear deadlines is like from the top of an Andean peak or on the Palmar beaches?

Joe is running a half marathon tomorrow along the Wilson Bridge—a run I would like to have done but for my departure via DCA and ATL so that I will be gone at just after nine

o'clock. I will meet Judy Sudmeier who is joining me at ATL who has long wanted to do a mission and sent me one of my favorite aphoristic quotes—of me! I remember distinctly when I had come up with it and it was after I had been mugged and robbed in Maputo Mozambique and considered that the rough start might have sabotaged the whole Fulbright beginning but for the later help and hospitality of Ivo Garrido and family and I then got stagger started to push forward very rapidly until with a rush it was almost over with so much more still to be done. I said this is exactly like life!

So, I have also done a few home improvements. I bought a dehumidifier at Home Depot and set it up in the basement after Dale Kramer said I might have a leak in some fixture since I had spotted mildew along the basement ceiling under the powder room. He checked it out but there is no leak. I bought the dehumidifier and started it up and produced five gallons per day from the basement moisture of the air. It is coming so briskly that I got a section of garden hose and hooked it up to drain to the basement drain hole so that I will not have to empty the large reservoir three times a day. This should decrease the mildew that has come along with the heavy rains we seem to have had all summer while the Eastern Shore had lost their entire corn crop due to drought not that far away from the gullied rivulets along my driveway and in the woods down to the streams.

But, I am packed up now and the captions are sent even if they were not my selections and not of the pictures I would have picked. But the more important ones will still have to be gone over and perhaps I might get some access somewhere to do that or just wait until I am back, but it is very unlikely it will be done easily in the Andean isolation since it certainly has not been here!

At least all of the summer events up to and through the Canada/Texas visits and the Parks half Marathon are loaded up and sent to you in both Flickr and York access accounts—just in time to send you the next two groups from the Palmar Mobile Surgical Mission and the Andean climb of Cotopaxi.

WHERE THE DEER OF DERWOOD PLAY

It has happened nearly every day, but only on the days that I am home can I really appreciate it. I look out my window as I arise and look down to see a few deer on the drive picking up the big succulent white oak acorns. I then come down to breakfast and a big doe is bedded in front of the Bay Window under the mountain laurel at the carriage lamp. I come down to pour out my breakfast cereal (Cheerios this morning) and even turn on the light. The doe is cuprous and wants to know who it is that is within the breathing range of her, but is assured that it is I and we watch each other for a while, Then she goes back to ruminating and remains bedded within my easy range of photography or sniffing out. She has usually a pair of twin fawns accompanying her, which are still spotted, so they must be a second fawning of this year. I have a couple of big bucks in total eight of them eight points or larger, and they have been cozy

and brotherly all year, but as the days cycle toward the equinox—coming up this week as fall officially arrives in Derwood, --they will be butting heads, already having scraped the velvet off their racks.

I have watched the homey scene often, and taken photos a few times. The deer that know me do not spook even if I use a flash. Today, as I prepare for departure, I decided to shoot a brief video clip of Derwood deer at ease, and did so. It is a pretty going away scene, and when I return those same green leaves that are hanging down in the crisp fall air are going to be golden and dropping as fall will set in in earnest—and the deer will look even more at home in the Derwood woods less obscured by the greenery that covers them now.

A SLOW DAY IN DCA TSA SECURITY

THE THIRD DEGREE, THREE TIMES OVER

Diane Downing gave me a ride to DCA on her way to DCCRC, so to have her on time for church, I would be three hours early for my flight to have her on time for church, and it is a good thing that I elected this side of the church service rather than the one she had suggested –to come to DCA on the way out of church after it gets out probably after 12:30 PM for the 2:00 PM takeoff. I know I would not be admitted to an international flight except over two hours before departure, so I had arrived too early rather than too late. If I had done the latter, I would surely have missed the flight, since I had not factored in an hour at the TSA super-scrutiny.

I had hoped to run with Joe at dawn this morning but that did not happen since Joe was going to do an inaugural half marathon run across the Wilson Bridge—the first time the bridge has been closed for this new purpose. I would have liked to do that run myself. But I did my own half marathon last weekend, and could not have got to the flight on time if I had tried even though it is close to DCA.

I learned that if I had checked bags on only the Atlanta flight I would have to pay for them but I still get a two bag allowance on the international flights. I had already packed a bag for Ecuador of surgical supplies, especially the spinal anesthesia kits, but did not want to struggle with two check in bags, and I had offloaded my own Osprey back pack into the inside of the SCI Blue Bag, and then stuffed in as much suture, Atenolol and lab supplies as it could hold in toping it up after adding all the recent surgical journals I had also carried. I figured the other supplies could go back with Edgar and Dolores to Ecuador on their return from the ACS a week later since they will then have a four bag allowance. So, though I have a two bag allowance, I am checking in only one oversized bag, since I have the combined surgical supplies and my backpack with some of the items I would need for the cold climb into the High Andes after a warm beach stay at Palmar at Pacific sea level.

I checked in relatively easily after bag drop at the agent in the terminal and then carried my carryon bag to the security screen. I took off my shoes and unloaded all the materials of suspicion into a separate bin, such as my laptop, and sailed through the check screen---except for one thing. “Is this your bag?” Yes, so” if you will come with me, we will have to run a few tests.” So I went with them and they took out the wand with the swabs which go into an automated reader for the screening of volatile explosive chemicals. They unpacked the bag down to the inclusions of the card readers and camera cards and thumb drives to scan each of them individually. They especially did not like the GPS—in fact, the overweight woman whom I told it was a GPS, asked “What is a GPS?” She called over a supervisor who looked at it and said “It is a GPS.”

But the fun had not even started. “I am afraid there has been a machine malfunction and we will have you come with us to another machine.” So, I went to another machine and was told not to stand in such a position so that I could see the monitor which continually announced “Nothing of suspicious origin” “What is it that you are looking for with this machine?” I asked as she repeated the swabs of the interior of each pocket and every item in the bag. “I cannot discuss this further with you” she said. She added, “Did you come early since you are allowing extra time for your bags to be checked?” I said I had come early in order to meet international flight requirements. She pulled out the book by Greg Mortenson, and scanned its pages. She did not even bother to read my card, which might have explained what was going on in this trip, but went through the small innocuous pieces of the bag like sunglasses and cameras, opening the battery compartment and swabbing the batteries. She may have used up about fifty of those patches by the time she was through and they all flashed the same message. She was intent on finding the “plastique explosive” I must obviously be packing on to the flight I am trying to get to, so she announced we will re-scan your bag—now thoroughly disrupted and the component pieces laid out in accessory trays to also be re-run through the x-ray scanner. I simply watched each of the other passengers coming through, with a very bored expression since I had not anxiety about the time having started off early for this series of flights.

As the pieces came through the scanner, another agent simply announced “You may go now!” Not until I have re-packed each of the pieces they had scattered from my very efficient packing job and trying to get them all back into the same bag and place from which they came. It at least gave me a good inventory of what I am carrying in such small sub pockets as the cards and batteries stock of the digital camera, since she had managed to look into most of these small components more recently than I had.

This is symptomatic of a bloated agency with too many personnel, inadequate training, and too many fancy machines to play with all of which are temperamental but still less fallible than the personnel. IF they want to “Cut the fat” (double entendre intended”) in government spending and deficit reduction, I would suggest they start with this new and altogether useless agency which is all about guaranteeing the prevention of an inevitable event all of which is predicated on some giant international conspiracy threat instead of some random act of human

caused lighting strike and that threat is less certain than that of the interference with the main industry of the US—getting real work down—with costs that are going to pass by any potential support from the industriousness they are preventing.

ENROUTE TO ANDEAN SOUTH AMERICA, NOW ON THE CONSOLIDATED CARRIER DELTA WHICH ABSORBED NOW, AS THE FINAL CLEARANCE FOR THE MERGER OF EQUALS U/A AND CONTINENTAL CREATES ANOTHER CONSOLIDATED AIR CARRIER—LARGEST ON EARTH FOR FEWER BREAKS TO TRAVELERS

It is not easy traveling, even when it ought to be. For examples, this easy slack period of a non-busy Sunday morning made for the hyperanxious scanning I had just received in DCA security which was an exercise in harassment, not safety. And, I am now aboard Delta to South America by way of Atlanta. No benefits there to the traveler since I remember all the prior air carriers I once had flown to South America like Branif, Pan Am and Eastern all of which have been long gone and digested into the mega-business of losing airlines. Delta had absorbed Northwest since my last circumnavigation, so that they get “economies of scale” which is the reason for the most recent merger between two giants of equal size—U/A and Continental, not for any passenger benefit, but to save money and increase profitability. As the Homeland Security Agency has become almost overnight the largest government bureaucracy without a single measurable outcome of positive benefit that can be monitored while each of the bloated agents of this new agency are getting full government benefits, salaries, day care, retirement and health care—in perpetuity, since no one ever backs off an unnecessary security program, since, “See, it is working!” The employees are, at least, witness the last hour I had spent in DCA.

With a number of employees second only to the military in the US payroll, all these drones have proliferated until the elephant can no longer carry them. Only WalMart is bigger, on its way to making a Half Trillion dollars in sales, and at least THOSE are considered by the end-user consumer as something that was needed at the point of purchase.

I am now somewhere over Panama after having crossed the now polluted Gulf of Mexico for the last of the daylight as a teenager sitting next to me had tried to close my window shade since before takeoff, obliterating my view and also the light I needed to read a fair chunk of Greg Mortenson book which I am getting close to completing. Our two books will fit well together so I am glad he is the author of the Introduction to Gifts from the Poor.

We had a bit of turbulence with some wind shear in free fall for a few minutes, and the Hispanic hysteria came out in full throat. I believe we got out of that by picking a new altitude as we get closer to the Equator in a period of the disturbances at this level of atmosphere know to

us in the Gulf area as Hurricane season. But we are even on course now so I will try to type up a little more despite the disgruntlement of those who are eager to scan as many movies as can be seen on a five and a half hour flight. Almost directly south of the Derwood HOMER GPS mark, there is a decided eastward inclination of the whole South American continent so that the west coast of South America is directly beneath the East coast of the North America that I use as a Home base orientation as to longitude.

I had finally met—in only a glimpse, Judy Sudmeier, as she came on the plane. I had paged her at the gate to see if I could meet her there as we boarded. She is the nurse practitioner who is my nurse accompanying me on this CinterAndes mission after the two Microbiology and Tropical Medicine young women who had occupied most of my time and correspondence in preparation for this trip simply dropped out without even notifying me, on the basis that they thought that a trip to Ecuador would cost about as much as a weekend at ocean City. The airfare I am consuming on this trip to Quito is a thousand dollars and then the hotel Merkur Alameda will be an added expense until the early morning flight to Cuenca which adds another %250, so they got a brief glimpse of these numbers and simply stopped making plans after all year saying this is the one mission that they would be accompanying me on after talking with their friend Edward (Jay) Miller who had the same misgivings and five or six withdrawals after that many meetings with me until he finally went with me on the mission to Tanzania which turned out to be the best decision of his life, he later reported, and despite not having enough money to get himself to East Africa he somehow borrowed enough to go on to South Africa to take in a few of the World Cup activities with a family friend. So, the MTM has been a contiguous source of eager applicants about two thirds of whom have simply dropped out, and all of those at the last possible minute.

I learned from Jordan Plieskatt what had caused his last minute withdrawal from three consecutive missions on which he was booked, including the last one on which he was the coordinator. He said to me as I left that on Monday he was going to court to finalize a divorce, and work out the custody arrangements. So I understand now the inexplicable last minute withdrawals, and he may be able to start making plans for the next series to see if he can actually pull one of these off as we are getting the really big mission to South Sudan right at the most dynamic time in its history and possibly even with the fulfillment of my promise to send them a container filled with the ingredients of a new hospital if they could forgo the violent clashes of their cattle and young girl raids between Murle and Dinka and hostility with the Nuer. It seems to be holding, and now it is possible that Team Rubicon may actually sponsor the container as well so that we can both hold the south Sudan CME summit and include multiple tribal groups including archrivals such as the Murle of PiBor which had made their promises to me on the documentary film. I saw a big article in the Washington Post on the possibility of the postponement of the referendum vote to secede now scheduled irrevocably for January 9. But I also saw a center section of the Time magazine to which I have started a subscription, showing pictures of the Murle and of Dinka cattle camps almost identical to all those I have taken. It is

for this reason that I should get out there in this dynamic time and fulfill my end of the bargain that they have held to since my January visit.

I got much of my typing down on the one hour and thirteen minute flight from DCA to ATL and now the five and a half hour flight to Quito can be used to see one movie—Oceans—after their meager dinner, but very good as the only meal of the day almost always promises to be. On the marquee in ATL it announced that dinner is served, but effective December 1 plan to collect dinner only with your credit card, even on the international flights.

As always, I have made prior arrangements to go on this mission and in the interval after having made all the plans even before the last several missions I had made like the Burma and Canada /Texas trips, I forget I am actually leaving from the first days of autumn in Derwood to the early springtime of Andean Ecuador after an interval on the Pacific beaches where John Sutter, my other accompanying team member has already been for a week doing some surfing. I know he would rather have gone up the mountains with me to Cotopaxi at the end, but he had made a prior arrangements to get to Bethel Alaska after arranging g that with Jill Seaman. But, I have had nothing but discouragement from Jill, as always, as she says they are overwhelmed and are worried they may need the boats there to carry all of their people across the Nile when not if violence breaks out. She says things are very unstable (when, I keep asking, have I EVER been there when things are just hunky dory stable and peaceful?) and besides they are in a kala azar epidemic which has them very busy. Not, I try to remind her, as busy as you were when we were last there, when we did NOT just “set up a surgery clinic” but in fact did mainly kala azar treatments helping out in the burgeoning clinic and only did the urgent malignant cases she had kept as emergencies for me to do on the second day of our visit. But, Jill is a perpetual worrier, and is sure we will overwhelm her with requirements for her hosting us, which she might recall has never happened in all the repeated visits since we have always carried our own accommodations and food, and have pitched in to do what needed doing, without a pre-formed agenda of our own.

I will talk about this and all the subsequent pieces of the (January) Philippines) and February South Sudan and Chad—CAR--? Congo parts of the itinerary as Scott Downing is now calling Ray Pontier to get his aircraft to overfly the unsafe hostile parts of Chad to get our team to Zemio and help the five thousand refugees from Ass in a makeshift and very hungry part of Zemio CAR under the leadership of Jean Marco. He wrote me a letter in Pazande translated by Diane which tells of the people of Assa being “Hungry to Death” but eager to see us, and also hoping to have me directly finance the education of his three children, as the money I had left last time I had visited, apparently went to the support to f the education of all of Andre’s children as Jean Marco reported it. This is a very typical African response to any largesse, the first hands through which it crosses are the 100^ owners of any resource that falls like manna into their hands. This is the reason I MUST be there if and when the container arrives, since the container will never make it beyond the first stop if the doors are opened and immediate ownership is claimed for only one group when it is designed to do away with this parochial tribal claims and

get to an all South Sudan union of a care including getting their care perhaps directed by former arch enemies, as I had done before with Hutus directing care to Tutsis in Rwanda and vice versa. But it could evolve --like Ajak's wedding--from a celebration of peaceful collaboration and coming together, as high hopes are dashed, not by the failure of their far-away American friend to fulfill his promise to them, but by the absconding of the treasures that they are counting on being delivered in whole or in part which will surely be identified as the property of their rivals if no donor hand is there to re-allocate the provisions. Life is never simple, and in the convoluted circumstances more than once removed and to be operational on the far side of the world by desperate people who see the distant American as an NGO of unlimited largesse to be exploited or even wasted before it is ever to be shared. Witness the fact that poor Ajak is no getting toward a year since the final celebration of his marriage and is not yet married, since the OTHER Dinka clan is still holding out and keeping his bride Tabitha hostage to see what more they can extract from Ajak's wealthy American friends to pour unimaginable luxury into their lives. It is surely their "once in a lifetime" chance to "shoot the moon" and it surely does not hurt to try. As the English speaking clan member of Tabitha said when he addressed us in response to my welcome and well wishes at the ceremony interrupted by still further demands escalated by orders of magnitude when they learned that Ajak was being accompanied by an American professor with an accompanying team and film crew with several thousand dollars worth of sound and film equipment on lavish display: "Hear me well; my name is Deng Achol (I have forgotten the real name) and you will satisfy ALL our demands ." He probably got hero points for confronting the American doctor and making ridiculous demands (even larger than the underwriting of the hugely expensive book granted to the MMHOFF) and herd me clearly state in return that I was an individual, not an NGO, and not representing any large group, and here as a volunteer, which I reminded them had first been working for the four early visit to South Sudan to THEIR Dinka clan in eastern Jonglei Province around Duk Payuel. I had already been generous, and the bull they were eating and of which I had not partaken was my gift to them for the conclusion of the negotiations not the start of a new and exaggerated round. It is easy to see why bride staling, abduction of young women and tribal even clan warfare is the staple of their daily existence. I am familiar with greed in several cultures, and they seemed a bit more naked and obvious and quite egregious and this was an offense not just to Ajak and his friends and family, but most specifically to me, and I had a lot of other groups with whom I could deal marked more generously by gratitude and collaboration supporting such as their luck in having Ajak in their community, not to weigh him down with such an anchor of their own ferocious mendacity.

So, I am heading toward a more humble and collaborative group of recipients of our medical mission than the subgroup of the Jonglei Clan of the Dinka Bor and the conditional disapproval once again of the Upper Nile as too dangerous (as before) while there are an almost unlimited number of potential sites that are needy and provide more facilitation than obstacles. I also have a loyalty to some stranded and forgotten peoples from Assa displaced across the river into CAR which qualifies them as refugees and therefore candidates of UN aid. I could go

directly and hand Jean Marco the US currency that will assure a health care education for his daughter who has been in limbo since their exile and take care of some of the needs of the population that was the e focus of the last book which I hope to have far outstripped by the success of the coming one.

10-SEP-B-3

A DAY IN TRANSIT—IN A NEAR-COMEDY OF ERRORS IN DIRECTING LOCAL DRIVERS TO DESTINATIONS I HAVE NEVER BEEN IN A MID-DAY GRACIOUS HOSTING AT “FLORIDA”” ACCOMMODATION OF EDGAR RODAS AND A SPECIAL DRIVER TO THE LONG ROAD TRIP THROUGH THE SPECTACULAR PARQUE NACIONAL DE CAJA (14,000 FEET) TO THE COASTAL PALMAR SITE OF OUR MISSION AND MY ACCOMMODATION ON THE BROAD BEACHFRONT OF THE PACIFIC SURF ON PALMAR SANDS

September 20, 2010

I tapped on the door of Room 110 at what I thought was about five thirty AM to awaken Judy Sudmeier, whom I had met on the plane only after I had settled in to my window seat on the five and a half hour flight down to Quito from Miami Florida. I had paged her at the gate to see if she was in the waiting area, but did not get a response, and only later found out that she was even later in arrival in ATL than I was, and we each had to get over to the “T-terminals” to board the Delta flight to Quito. I had emailed to see if I might count on a reservation in the CinterAndes preferred Quito Hotel. I had later learned about an email saying that we each had a reservation but that was found out before we got the later email notice, and it would not be a long time in residence as we left Quito early---too early it turned out.

Only later did I see that the CinterAndes reservation had given me an upgrade to “Privilege Class”—and I am so sensitive to luxury! It was a nice room, but the once feature that did NOT work, was eh wireless access key code, so I did not learn anything from my attempts to connect, which were rejected even after I was billed for the access. So, I would have to hope for some connection enroute to see if I could learn what was happening about the images for both B & W and color insert, and whether either/and both Paul Farmer and Jeff Sachs had come through and whether Jim Scott was still overdue for “book blurbs.”

We did not figure that the rest of our day would be spent n a comedy of errors of the transit type. We arrived TOO early at the airport, and were shooed away and told to come back after 8:00AM being present for the possible early flight but ticketed for the 9:00 AM flight that was relayed to Edgar by email. We emerged from the airport after flying past the stunning volcanic snow capped cone I had so much appreciated on my last trip to Cuenca. I asked the name when I last flew past it and one I asked seemed to know, or more likely, did not understand

me. I am going to assume from photos I have seen that it is Cotopaxi—the same snow cone I will be ascending within the week, but learned later that it is actually Chimborazo, the highest mountain on earth when measured from earth's center, and the strategic scientific site of the expedition that fixed the Equator to re-name this nation and establish the meter as a unit of measure after the French revolution. If I can tolerate the first part of my Ecuadorian week at sea level and the next few days in rapid ascent to 20,000 feet—which sounds like a sure prescription for a headache.

We were right On Schedule, as we had known it and had emailed ahead to Edgar. SO, I prepared to meet Edgar as I had when I last arrived in Cuenca's airport. When we collected my big blue SCI bag at the airport carousel, I went out into the airport and saw---no one familiar. I tried to ask for anyone who might know if Cinter Andes had been present to see me as we arrived. No one I asked seemed to know. I then was sent over to the Azuay (Province's) tour agency and there I told them I was expecting to be met by Edgar Rodas. The name sound familiar to them and also they looked up the Fundacion CinterAndes and gave me a phone number. It seems everyone here, as in Africa is hoarding expensive minutes on phone cards that are traded briskly, and he was reluctant to make a call for me, but I have neither phone nor phone card. SO, he called the foundation and asked to speak to Dr. Rodas. Gonzalo's daughter answered and explained that he was in Palmar. I sent through a message that we were expected and that we should call Dolores Rodas at home and let her know we have arrived. There was no Dolores at home but there was no answer and when it was known what we are talking about we were told to come to Dr. Rodas' home and he would contact us there. Finally, I was able to get a call (incoming only) from Edgar who had heard nothing and had expected us at eight o'clock at the arrival of the seven o'clock early flight for which we had been prepared and were at the airport at six, but they would not let us check in since our tickets were marked for nine o'clock. With reluctance, Edgar took off in the Universidad\ad del Azuay van and the students and resident s he had from Cuenca, and form UK and form Monash University in Australia.

He was delighted we were here, even though he had given up hope of our arrival, and had thought we were arriving at eight, now discovering the timing on the airline schedule he had received. He said we would get a driver to take us from his home and that someone would call; the taxi driver to direct him to his house, as soon as we found such a driver. We got into a taxi for the four dollar drive over to Edgar's house.

We saw a lot of the countryside in the general vicinity of the Cuenca River, almost all of it at high mountain level above the river. I kept trying to explain that we should get down lower since I knew the river would not be running up hill. The driver had a cell phone but had no minutes on his cell to call out. We first stopped several times for him to buy a card I would pay for in order that he call out. No luck, I then said if we could stop at a "Cabina" phone booth, we might call the foundation and get in touch with the office and then Dolores to see where we were supposed to go. It finally happened we came upon an old woman sorting out puffed corn and separated it from the unpuffed kernels, a typical large kernelled maize product later said to be

typical of Azuay Province. I took photos of her as the driver used the pay phone cabina to make the call and was directed to the home number for Edgar Rodas. All this was happening as we used up the morning that might have been possible for us to make the transit to Palmar a full day's drive to the coast. I then saw that he had finished the call and I offered the old woman fifty US cents in an Ecuadorian coin I had got from the hotel Merkur Alameda in exchange for my twenty dollars when I tried to get tip change. I waited as the old woman scavenged around in the neighborhood to find enough pennies and dimes to make up my change of twenty five cents and would not allow me to walk away while she still owed me for this transaction.

We got into the taxi and made a return trip again back and forth in the high rural hills, each freshly plowed to get ready for the spring plantings on this the twentieth day of September. It seemed he was getting instructions from someone who would call his cell phone, explaining that he should take the "second left" and repeated that to the point where we got further and further lost higher and higher. I said we must go down to where the river was and described the compound of Edgar and his daughter and his son, and said he must be lower down since his compound backed up on the Cuenca River quite near the exchange with the Autopiste. We spent another hour "sightseeing" rural Cuenca suburbia, or more accurately "lost" in my four dollar taxi ride.

When we finally out of exasperation came down to the Autopiste and crossed under it to the other side and then crossed a bridge over the Cuenca river, we took the turn I recognized, and dead ended into Florida, the compound of Edgar and Dolores and the two houses one of the son and one for the daughter, Chris and Gloria respectively each with several children. I was met by a couple of the serving girls who let us in the gate. It turned out that it was not Dolores on the other end of the line, who would surely have ant3ed to talk with me, but it was Paulo, their son who is the climber who is making the plans for our early Friday mooring departure to go for the Cotopaxi climb along with Anna Maria the second daughter of Gloria (the older daughter is a high school senior named Angie and her father is named Felipe, magistrate in the cantonal judgeship dealing with social issues in Cuenca. We met him and later Gloria, as I stopped long enough to show Judy the grounds around Edgar's house and his shrine and the river and a new trout pond just built on the compound. Gloria came later as she is gathering data for her thesis in Education on teaching linguistics. Felipe I met later, her husband who came home for lunch with us before returning to his cases at two o'clock,

Edgar called Paulo and told us we would be getting a driver named Manuel to drive us in the CinterAndes Isuzu all the way to Palmar through Guayas, the Province of Guayaquil and a southern new division of the Guayas Province now named Santa Elena, with a six hour drive expecting to take us in at eight o'clock. I also had a brief chance to discuss our climbing plans with Paulo and then immediately tried to access email through the outside router for the wireless access. IO could get the good news that Paul Farmer had finally contributed a brief "Short and Sweet" blurb that looks like it has cover potential, even though delayed to the last possible moment, with no word from Jeff Sachs, and abundant confusion on how we will select and edit

out and then caption the B & W images for the incorporation into the first chapters of the book on the “early years” and the possible addition of further color images in addition to those I had already captioned before departing and had sent through Diane Downing’s email access..

I quickly re-sent the access by York and Flickr of those 997 images I had photographed from the albums over the “early years” and then said I would work very hard at night if necessary upon return if I could get the images selected into an order and with captions that could get set into the production schedule as the printed agenda calls for, even though I will be gone to Michigan and then at the ACS, even after Edgar Rodas, Dolores his wife, and son Edgar, the latter two arriving from Florida, each converge on Derwood on Saturday, a day before I return from Michigan.

We were invited for a soup and salad, a good combination from Edgar’s own garden on the veranda outside his office at home. It is not a good idea to eat fresh lettuce in much of South America where their irrigation is often with human fertilizer, except in the instance of Edgar’s own garden. We had a good visit with Edgar’s daughter and I had shown to Paulo the few items I had brought along for the hiking up Cotopaxi. He will get a harness and a sleeping bag for me, and I told him of my other equipment and we parted as each of us was pushing to catch up with our individual schedules. As we left Cuenca, there was a low ceiling hanging over a slanted springtime sunlight on the old and new cathedrals which made the town look magic. It was a brief good interlude to follow a frenetic faux pas, and an aimless chasing around as I was directing someone to find something in their own country through a language barrier. It was near comic, but it ended well, I did not realize it was only the first of twice today.

Manuel was unsure of how to get to Palmar even though he said he had been there many many times. When we stopped, as we did at least thirty times to ask which direction and how far is Salinas? The answer was always---“Derecho y Larga larga.” Straight Ahead and a long long way.

The other driver called Manuel’s cell phone often too and we heard the same story about twenty times from them. We were never lost, but were so hesitant that he would often be driving on the brakes on the straightaway autopiste, looking for signs and directions, and then asking passerby who either had no clue, or added Derecho y Largo, Largo, Largo~”

As soon as we left Cuenca we were in awe inspiring country. We climbed steadily from the already eight thousand foot elevation of Cuenca to the entrance to “Parque Nacional de Cajas. I had gone through a very large Parque Nacional in my way to Zumba in February called Podocarpus which was a park of wide variety of flora, named after tree, and filled with wildlife that included the spectacled bear. It turns out that Parque Nacional de Cajas is even more stunning. We drove up through tree line into tundra. There were isolated glacial tairns and small valleys carved into “U shape” by glaciers. It looked like many of the photos I had ever seen of Torres del Paine in Patagonia in Chile on the Argentine border.

Stunning!

There are finger pinnacles sticking up along steep mountain crests that appear to be glacial arêtes, over glacial cirques—and this is snow country---like Kilimanjaro—ice and snow capped ON THE EQUATOR! The scenery allows for huge vistas since there is no tree cover, and in that way it looks like Colorado Rocky Mountain National Park displays of tundra above tree line—but this is higher already. I had to retrieve my Himalayan NGS watch to use the altimeter. I only was able to get it out from the back as my ears were popping on our descent already well along, and at that point it read 3,560 meters. There are peaks I had learned from Edgar that are crossed that are 4,080 meters, which would mean I have just come through fourteen thousand feet of equatorial mountains, and the vaunted fourteeners of Colorado are all below us here. It is real tundra.

As we continued down along the highway with periodic interruptions from highway engineers doing roadway reconstruction, we came back into tree line, and not just any trees but tropical rainforest. It was apparent as we went along that we were seeing papaya and occasional fruit trees of unusual kinds. We then began to drop precipitously off the scarp and down to the coastal plains, going abruptly in ten kilometers from 3,000 meters to fifty meters. Now we saw well watered plantations of thousands of hectares with first seen cacao trees, then huge banana plantations, then sugar cane. We came closer to denser populations then entered the Guayas River valley of the heavy port district of Ecuador—the biggest Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil and the principle port in this part of the world.

The reason that the earlier park had been named the Cajas or “box” is that people were never sure when crossing it that they would make it across alive so they would carry their coffins. (“Cajas.”) Our cross to bear was Manuel driving on an open Autopiste with his foot on the brakes looking for pedestrians to ask all of whom had told him the same thing as the phoned instructions that we were on the right track but had a very long way to go which is not made faster by stopping and asking nor riding the brake along the highway. Since I saw signs for the coast, I knew we had to be in that direction. It is near the huge city of Guayaquil so that also meant we had to finalize this trip at the beach town of Palmar, to which he said he had gone very many times. Like the taxi driver this morning who lives in Cuenca, I am the one giving them instructions on how to get there as a default for their hesitancy.

We eventually made it right along the gentle surf sound of the Palmar beach. There we met Edgar Rodas and Gonzalo who had been the “air traffic control” guiding Manuel in. John Sutter was here after hanging out for a week and gathering up some “characters” who knew about the history and the big waves that were sometimes available. John and I will talk since the rest of this year of his through July is mine, yet he still would like to gain a more respectable skill, probably anesthesia, and we will get him around the world and back here again as Edgar has asked me to launch new missions sites with him. They had held up supper so that they could all meet with me and the newcomers and we all talked after dinner in the sister’s management of

the clinic and its good facilities. So, we are finally here at “Destination Travel!” But only with a lot of distant help from our friends and a lot of making up for the difference along the way!

10-SEP-B-4

**THE START OF OUR SURGICAL SERIES IN PALMAR ON THE
PACIFIC BEACH IN ECUADOR AT 02* 01.43 S AND 080* 43.31 W ON
WHAT IS OUR LOCAL OFFICIAL FIRST DAY OF SPRING—EQUINOX
BEGINS WITH A WALK ON THE BROAD BEACHES UNDER FRIGATE
BIRDS OVER THE FISHING FLEET OF PALMAR**

September 21, 2010

In a misty cool dawn of this first day of Spring two degrees south of the Equator that gave its name to this nation which was formerly the Bishopric of Quito before the scientists of the French Revolution established Chimborazo as the highest mountain from the earth's center and gave us the new revolutionary measures of the metric system I took a walk on the Pacific beach outside my window. It is beautiful. It is also cool and misty, not the kind of weather that would induce one into "hanging ten" or running out into the minimal surf of this "Pacific" calm sea. It is a working port for subsistence fishermen rather than a boardwalk resort town.

A flowering bougainvillea shrub is blooming at the run down corner of the room I have alone, even though it is well equipped with an extra set of mosquito net shrouded bunk beds. I could shoot photos of the fishing fleet of trawlers bobbing at anchor out in front of my room framed by the bougainvillea blossoms and with a vortex of frigate birds spiraling up the thermal staircase. The frigate birds which I consider to be the tropical "Lawyers of the skies" feed on fish stew—but do not catch fish. They harass and hassle the fishing gulls and other birds as they return from their feeding excursions and when they have sufficiently annoyed the birds which go into dives and spins to rotate out of the way of the marauding pirates, the birds who have been working hard at carrying the freight back to their brood disgorge the gullet full of fish parts already partially digested, and the slop is retrieved by an aerial swoop of the fork tailed maneuverable marauding frigates—a free lunch, already caught and already pre-digested. See? The barristers of the tropical air ways!

There are abundant other birds, including sandpipers in a quick step ready retreat from the lapping broad surf, and a series of pelican pairs gliding on the air currents over the waves. A large quarrel of vultures is making trouble over a corpse of some unknown animal (as opposed to vegetable or mineral—it could include the human of the species!—that has washed up at night. In addition I see the "gaviotas" that are at the sand where the surf meets the land resting up to go back out to fish since they have had their previously plundered provender.

There are skeletons of fishing trawlers propped up on the beach, in the reversal of decay—these are the roughed in endoskeletons of the sea worthy boats they will be as opposed to the decaying bare bones of what once was a watercraft and now is only a collection of fossilized outline—these are going in the other direction. I have heard later that these same boats have been under construction for many years, in about the same stage of semi-completion of their wood ribbed construction—obviously the capital of their small business enterprise loan did not come through and the “catch of the day” is financing the slow incremental progress, and may have to wait for full time construction shipwrighting if and when the working boat out on the water should meet some watery fate from which its captain and crew are spared.

MAKING PLANS WITH EDGAR RODAS AND JOHN SUTTER—SHORT AND LONG RANGE FOR EACH

I have had lengthy and philosophical, then very immediately practical discussions with Edgar Rodas. His wife Dolores is in Florida now with her son Edgar Rodas, who will be coming back to Ecuador next February to head up the trauma program at the Hospital del Rio of Universidad De Azuay—an office I have already seen with his name on the plate on my last visit. Edgar and Dolores will both be flying up to DCA on Saturday, when I will be in Michigan. John Sutter will pick them up in DCA and drive them to Derwood, where they will be Saturday night without me and enjoying a leisurely Sunday morning as I am on my way back from Michigan and the fiftieth anniversary of high school graduation.

I have plans to go to the ACS convocation with Edgar and Dolores on Sunday evening, then a very busy day on Monday which involves talks to be given in several ACS venues and a Monday evening of receptions at the Operation Giving Back and also an important one in University of Toledo’s reception at which I will be introducing Dan Saevig to Edgar and Dolores who will be the one supplying the early years’ photos of Edgar for the DVD that will be shown of his life as an inductee into the MMHOFF.

We will be attending the black tie ACS Board of Governors dinner on Tuesday night, and just as I had loaned Joe Aukward a tuxedo for that event last year, I figured I would make one available to Edgar so he did not need to carry one along from Ecuador. He will have a chance to carry back some of the surgical supplies I had sequestered for him after I had off-loaded the sutures, medications and the lab supplies for the use of CInter Andes this morning and have given to Luis Flores, the junior most surgeon on the University of the Azuay all the last six months journal I had accumulated on surgery as he is applying for a special five year laparoscopic fellowship in a program in Barcelona.

I am next going to set up a meeting on Wednesday with Michael Skinner of Pendragwn to talk about the long career of Edgar and plan a documentary, as well as tell of the future plans I am discussing with him now as I am making them with his already successful model of mobile surgical missions.

I have a model in mind: it should be a special twenty foot container, custom made to hold a larger operating theater, and a recovery room, and a bigger area between for scrubbing and the unavoidable clustering of people who always accumulate there to talk—in this instance, three students from Monash University senior medical students all, and two from Cuenca in Azuay and a woman from King’s College in London medical school who was born in Afghanistan of a father from Paghman and a mother from Kabul. She was fascinated to hear I had been in Afghanistan and we talked about it as I also introduced her to the work of Greg Mortenson. I also have John Sutter, veteran of five prior missions with me in Ladakh, Philippines, Malawi, Somaliland, Sudan in the Upper Nile and now in Ecuador before he and I go on the Grand Circumnavigation January through February, from Philippines (N Luzon and then Mindanao) then to South Sudan (Werkok +/- Old Fangak if he can talk with Jill Seaman in Bethel Alaska to reassure here that I do not require a “stable peace in South Sudan “ in order to schedule my visit, or the prior visits would never have come off to begin with, and then back through Nairobi to Chad and on to CAR and possibly into Congo as our anticipated under cover “Return to Assa.”

I have a dream. I need the container for a mobile surgical clinic that fits inside three different modalities, none of the three of which I want to own or pay for other than a short period of leasing. One is that it fits inside a Lockheed Hercules airlifter, which could be transported by MAC—Military Air Lift Command as a donor of this service which might be facilitated by TR if we can suggest making a pitch to USAA as a donor potential. Then this container can be offloaded on a flatbed truck or on a barge or boat to float the Amazon River or go to the Galapagos, or down from Zemio on the Congo River from the CAR—all of it based on the proven model of Edgar’s extensive years of surgical service without a death and with 0.5% infection risk.

So, I have gone over the several stages of these plans/dreams/ and shoot-the-moon schemes with both Edgar Rodas and John Sutter regarding the ACS, Pendragwn, TR, USAA and a few other agencies and organizations with which we might get collaboration on an already proven model of health care delivery that works, even in impoverished and sometimes hostile environments. It can make use of surplus military equipment, already resident in theatre, and can cover enough territory that it could not be claimed by individual tribal or clan claims of ownership that would be exclusive, unlike a fixed base which cannot be moved around with ease. It could also use access by water (Amazon, Congo or Galapagos) which are not capable of the classic Mobile Surgical Mission by truck, since the ownership of the vehicle is a high maintenance item when it is not in use.

We will discuss these issues further when we are back in DC and Derwood, and will try to work out the details of other future plans, as we are carrying out the operating circumstances of FIVE laparoscopic cholecystectomies today and FICE hernia repairs tomorrow with our team of Ecuadorian/American/Singaporean/Afghani/Australian personnel all gathered here for the fortieth occasion of the regularly recurring quarterly visits of the Isuzu CinterAndes truck.

The first day of our mission is the first part of the “general surgery” most frequently performed operations—cholecystectomy—in this case, five of them, each done the way they are now done virtually world-wide by laparoscopy. The second day, again, FIVE of them, is hernia repairs. The largest operation done in the truck was one of the gall bladder operations in which a dilated duct was encountered and the patient had an open conversion to a Roux en Y—a bowel anastomosis which is probably larger as an operation than should be done in a mobile surgical mission to be carried out by an itinerant team who leave the patients in a clinic designed for follow-up by local practitioners but also followed by Telemedicine from Cuenca.

I had a chance to upload the photos taken in the morning walk along the beach among the stark ribs of the fishing boats under construction. I met a few folk, including a German woman named Monica who had come a long time ago to Ecuador and adopted three small children who were each diabetic. Two have died but the third is married and has a small boy named Joseph who is her granddaughter. Another fellow whose name is Jan Smedmyr from Sweden has also been here a while and has told me that there is a good reason to consider Ecuador as an ideal retirement site. The government issues a cedula after a certain amount of red tape which declares the retiree as a resident, and if one has an income of 750 dollars equivalent a month, and lives here for two years with not more than ninety days in those two years abroad. But after that the retiree resident gets an automatic fifty percent discount off any air fare to travel anywhere on earth if the origin is from Ecuador for an absence as long as eighteen months abroad. So he is enjoying the advantages of being an Ecuador retiree and had teamed with Monica to make a nonprofit to help develop some sustainable income generation one of which is a small internet café but another it’s the growing of Oysters in cages off shore in aquaculture.

As it rained a bit most of the day on the misty Pacific coast, Edgar in his scrub suit and a white coat with the CInter Andes logo on it said he wanted to show me something that sounded like “beer.” We walked by the old church which is disused—and I thought would make a good inpatient facility and looks better than the more modern new church. We went around the corner to a messy fenced lot around a simple house. There in a crowd of cats and dogs was a yard full of deer. They had dark muzzles and long dark lashes behind goggle eyes, and had antlers that looked like the cross between Sika stags and white tailed deer but were about two thirds the size. They were munching on garden garbage of lettuce in plastic buckets. It all started when someone brought him a deer, Edgar explained, and then another and they bred to the point that there are more than a dozen of these captive deer in town.

On the way as we walked back, Edgar got pooped on by one of the frigate birds, and I told him that was still another reason for my not liking them!

I talked with each of the medical students especially the Afghani born woman who moved to London at age five who is in King’s College and who wants to go with me on a future Afghanistan mission. There were two Singapore born males in the four Australian students and they had started their several weeks’ rotation in a tour of the Galapagos. They were rather

surprised that a professor from the US took much notice of them, knew many of their instructors, and they were intent on corresponding with me and asking for future mission possibilities. The Cuenca Med students were interesting too—one left his sun glasses and was dropped off to make his own way back rather than losing his only pair of sunglasses. I talked a good deal with “Rucha” Dr. Luis Flores who was the junior most surgical faculty who had done more than half the driving on the way down to Zumba in February. He is applying for a five year absence in Barcelona, and is even planning to study Catalan of the Basques. He is going to go for an endoscopic fellowship then stay on to practice there a few years hoping to return. So, a day full of lap chole cases was his speed more than mine.

We all gathered for dinner served by the Catholic sister in charge and talked a bit with others who had attended such similar clinics over time since CinterAndes has come here every quarter and is now celebrating its fortieth time in Palmar!

10-SEP-B-5

**HERNIA REPAIR DAY FOLLOWS LAP CHOLE DAY IN THE TRUCK
AS WE PERFORM A SECOND FULL DAY OF OUR MOBILE SURGICAL
MISSION IN PALMAR ON THE PACIFIC BEACH**

September 22, 2010

**We are near Guayas Rio and the big city of Guayaquil at GUAY= 02* 00.40 S,
and 079* 56.76 W. which is due south of Derwood and 2,056 miles at 01*
bearing**

**We are now at PALM= 02* 01.43 S and 080* 43.31 W and both at Alt= 4
meters**

**I am a short stone's throw from the Pacific, admiring the skeletal fishing
boats' ribs and struts and the wheeling frigate birds overhead piles of netting
and floats**

**I walk the beach in the misty cool morning, despite being Equatorial, that is
Alexander Humboldt's Corriente out there.**

The plans I had made to go from the Operation Giving Back reception on Monday evening at the ACS meeting and arrive at the University of Toledo reception to meet Dan Saevig could not work out better. April 8, the evening before the MMHOF is also Edgar and Dolores's 44th anniversary.

I had a good time today. Edgar and I alternated supervising and assisting the hernia repairs, one of which in my instance had been previously repaired on the left and we could see the outline of the mesh, but this had probably led to the adult acquired hydrocele he had on the left while he had a large right inguinal hernia on the right and mainly wanted his small symptomatic umbilical hernia repaired. I talked with each one of the students, the Afghani "Dari Princess" the Monash med students, the Cuenca students and watched the hardest working one of us, Gonzalo lifting the patients and making sure they are all right.

We were finishing the last cases making sure that the epidural patients had started to urinate, and then we were going to take a walk along the deep cut of the river which is the fishing boat port, all of it at subsistence level. It was a picturesque scene as we strolled and pelicans dived and stray dogs chased us. I found the remains of a dolphin on the beach with the skull cleaned by scavengers but the smelly rest of him hard to get off my hands. I measured the

Puerta at 02* 23.94 S and 79* 37. 75 W and Alt= 1 meter. The Puerto is 2,872 miles from Derwood at bearing 01*

We came to an area where we were supposed to see a unique beach and it had a locked turnstile, so we parked and began a walk over the dunes with “EcuSol” as salt evaporation business was using the ponds to make salt and other ponds were andromedous, that is both fresh water and access to the sea for the aquaculture of prawns. I asked how they kept them from being predated by birds and suggested that they get the small boys armed with “Paica” which is a slingshot in American and a “catapult” in African Britishism.

We drove to a seafood restaurant which has a good deal of loyalty with one of their sons having been operated on by our team, and we had the whole group gathered on a sea front with the sound of the surf pounding near but we could not see it since a row of bushes were planted to prevent the restaurant from eroding into the sea. We had a cake brought in by Monica and John celebrating the 40th mission as spelled out in the frosting.

John Sutter had been here a week surfing with a pick up guide he had met named Aurelio guide he had met named Aurelio, who knew a lot of local history as well as a few things about the unique Valdivia culture here, which the Swedish John had said he used in the Foundation he made since here is a people with a past and a culture, but the question is do they have a future—so the foundation is Futuro Valdivia. We saw a little of that “local culture” as we went after dinner to the beachfront “board walk equivalent” in the resort town on the beach.

There were fire twirlers and buskers of all kinds serving up drinks shaken to a Brazilian beat or the smell of rather aromatic tobacco. There were the gaudy come-ons in the store fronts for the hang loose crowd of surfers and mostly foreign beach bums—Colombian, Venezuelan and Brazilian. We watched the youth of several nations stroll by trying to look like they could hold their liquor, and walked under an intersection of telephone lines on which were perched hundreds of sleeping birds—a warning seen by the intersection of linear bird poop at the intersection.

We are pulling out tomorrow, as Ganzalo already has, having left from the dinner to pack up the truck and return to Cuenca. We have been on a successful well proven mobile surgical mission in a coastal village which has hosted it forty times so it was easy. Edgar and I are talking about two sites where he has not yet done a mission—one is the province of Otovalo and the other in the Galapagos. By the connections through Anna Taft who arrives back in Otovalo Ecuador tomorrow which I had made with the former Ohio Governor’s daughter through Larry Conway, we have now set up the Otovalo, and Edgar’s cousin is going to try to rig up a roof for the small hospital being planned for the Galapagos. With a bit of further planning, we may go directly from Ecuador in early April to Toledo to celebrate the MMHOF induction and the 44th anniversary!

10-SEP-B-6

FROM THE PACIFIC BEACH AT PALMAR (ELEVATION TWO METERS) THROUGH THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE IN THE ANDEAN PARQUE NACIONAL DE CAJAS (ELEVATION 3,985 METERS) TO THE CUENCA VALLEY, A THOUSAND METERS LOWER TO START UP PRE-DAWN TOWARD THE PEAK OF COTOPAXI—THE STUNNING SNOW CONE I HAD SEEN AS HAD ALSO SEEN CHIMBORAZO, AS I HAVE FLOWN FROM QUITO TO CUENCA TO THE FLORIDA GUEST COTTAGE OF THE RODAS' HOME IN THEIR COMPOUND IN CUENCA

September 23, 2010

We made it out of Palmar on a full day's drive up from the Santa Elena new province to Guayaquil to drop off John Sutter who is going to get picked up by his guide Aurelio before he gets back this weekend to see his girlfriend of Indian descent who is expecting him or else he would have been interested in the climb of Cotopaxi. John will be home on Saturday as Edgar and Dolores and possibly Edgar junior also arrive and then he will carry them from airport to Derwood where they can enjoy a leisurely Sunday until they go to the ACS Convocation where I will try to meet them flying in at the same six o'clock of the convocation ceremony. John will then go for a few months to Bethel Alaska and then will be traveling with me for the rest of the time through the hoped for start of an anesthesia residency for which we are writing letters of support.

I got up before anyone else apparently and despite some hoarseness to my voice and a somewhat achy feeling, I knew I was going to have to rally to get on with the next phase of this adventure, heading up from sea level to one of the highest points in Ecuador. I surely hope that my sea level accommodation to the altitude does not incapacitate me on the climb. I made it to where breakfast would be held and an hour later the group filed in saying that they had waited for me, even though my door was open and the pack outside the door. I had breakfast with them and then we split up with most of the students going in the Azuay University van and the team of Anita our anesthesiologist, Edgar and I and Rucha (Luis Flores) our surgeon/driver along with John Sutter who would be baling out at the bus rank to meet with Aurelio to complete his tour and go back via Avianca through Bogota.

As we got underway, Anita got a phone call on her Blackberry saying her father who has had several heart attacks and at age 82 has had three stents in his coronaries, had had another

one/ A flurry of phone calls went back and forth but the outcome was that he had yet another stent placed and is doing well.

We drove up from the plane of the coast into the steep scarp and met the Neblina—the cloud forest, of a hugely varied flora as we got into the clouds and disputed roadways of the unstable terrain and landslides. I marked the Neblina at 02* 37.93 S and 079* 27.02 E at 610 meters. We now slalomed through the banana plantations and their crop dusters and the large cacao plantations and the cane fields of the planes gave way to banana palms. Apparently the cane makes its way into rum in some places, but mostly it is for “combustibles”—all fuel is gasohol and it is \$2.00 per liter.

We crossed the Rio Tamarindo a one-way stop at 1,307 meters and then had to wait again as the road crews conducted on e way operations at 1,517 meters. There were shear rock slides with heavy equipment reconstructing the road ways. We were leaning left and right in a slalom that reminded me of the Motocross race ways as we came to 3,278 meters at a point marked by 02* 47.42 S and 079* 18.19 W which was the start of the scenic terrain in which the Parque Nacional Cajas is located. We entered the gate at 3,699 meters and peaked out at 3,948 meters—the Continental Divide on the level of the roadway.

I took abundant photos of the “Torres del Paine” terrain and saw increasing “trout ponds” with trout for sale as “Truchas Naturales”—but they are rainbows, and therefore an exotic invasive import. These trout farms we saw as w09.97 W at 79* 02* 49.55 S and e entered the Cuenca Valley at 3,191 meters. One of the features I should underscore for any geographic view here is that the EAST Coast of North America is straight above the WEST Coast of South America and Derwood and Cuenca Are on the same exact time zone with the exception that for the next month we still have daylight savings time.

CUENCA= 02* 53.25 S AND 079* 02.48 w AT 2,549 METERS

I packed up my backpack with what I thought I would need for the climb and will rent the ice axes and crampons when we are close to Cotopaxi. There is a router out in the porch that should connect me to internet but it was very slow speed and I saw the page design by Kim which had incorporated all the suggestions but the critical component will be my presence to help vet the selection of photos and captions for them.

Without further adieu, I sat with Edgar and called Anna Taft as she arrived in Otovalo and set up a later mission with her, which will be CinterAndes first ever in that indigenous culture and province.

Paulo had taken the Hyundai SUV to change to all new tires for our trip, just as I had before leaving on this one. Paulo had gone out to a dance studio, a really big initiative since he is shy. There is a demonstration of the many native rhythms on Saturday when we might conceivably be back but we may be very tired and Paulo said he would not be unhappy to give it

a miss. We are ready to roll as we ever will be so here goes a long “Larga Larga” drive of 480 kms to arrive near the Cotopaxi we have discussed for some time in taking on as a real aerobic exercise, with a number of his coaches and climbing idols having mastered this climb in so graceful a way as to set new speed records in virtually running to the top—that is three and a half miles straight up on slanted ice and unstable rock. Here goes a try!

10-SEP-B-7

**LAUNCH FOR THE HIGHEST ICE COVERED SUMMITS OF THE
ANDES AS WE ATTACK COTOPAXI:**

September 24-25, 2010

**THE WAY TO THE TOP ALONG THE “PANAVIAL” INCLUDING
CAMPEINOS, BLUE HEARTS PAINTED ON ROADWAY, PALMIRA
SANDHILLS, AND THE OLDEST CHURCH IN ECUADOR ON OUR WAY
TO A VILLAGE WHERE WE RENT ADDITIONAL CLIMBING GEAR**

I had a very good and thorough tour of much of Ecuador in our long coursing along the legendary Panavial—“El InterAmericano”. I got up early, of course, earlier than any evidence of anyone else being moving. I had packed and now sat with a couple of postcards as I finished the reports on the missions and will fill in later on the mountain. I have been trying to up; load photos as I go.

Along the way, Paulo told me about his climbing heroes, including a former priest named Zuarito who at age 80 is still climbing. He takes young boys into a climbing camp and has nurtured some of the greats from Ecuador. He has no use for anything North American except for Coca Cola and cigarettes! He is the author of one of the books that Paulo had read. Another is Ivan Vallarjo, who is the only Ecuadorian to have climbed all fourteen 8,000 meter peaks on earth and wrote a book “Mi Propio Everest”—My Own Everest—which I will try to get for Paulo. By sheer coincidence, we met him coming down as we were on our way “up slope.”

Fabio Zuarito is a crotchety fellow who despises cell phones and TV saying in a book “Ilde Libre” that real happiness comes only from effort exerted. He takes his boys at graduation ceremony and gives each three oranges, three potatoes and 3 eggs for three days and turned them loose to survive the slopes. He has many protégées including Ivan Valarjo and had written a book “Mountains: the Passion and the Message.”

There is a pretty orange small blossoming flower here called the Chaquihuirhua which is endemic to the Andes as edelweiss is to the Alps and only grows above 4,000 meters—we saw it as we finally approached the start of our climb.

There is a straight road here, not curving and contoured like the Panavial roadway, but a straightaway over the mountains that the Chasquis ran. These were the couriers of the Inca and it took them four hours to reach Quito from here. It will take us six hours to go as far in a vehicle at highway speed.

There is also a railway here which was once functioning and they are now trying to resurrect it as a scenic route, but it has not yet been used and the tracks are abandoned. The deflation of this plan to make a scenic railroad came when a Japanese tourist stood up and was decapitated by some overhanging branch and there has been no progress on restoration of the rail way since that incident.

We passed through a village called El Tambe at 02° 30.20S and 78° 56.67 W at 3,000 meters. Edgar Rodas was born in Cuenca in a building we had visited in February but his father held a lot of land here in El Tambe, so for some time Edgar lived here, the only time he was out of Cuenca for any period before his two brief stints in Saipan,

There are wolves, foxes and some bears on Cotopaxi. I am ready to see whatever is on the move there, but I hope it would also be me, since I am uncertain how I can do arriving from sea level at my window at Palmar to the peak of the Andes.

As we have gone through the villages and the vistas of this vast open mountain country, I see the homburg-wearing women with their layers of wool skirts and incongruous white stockings. I ask what language they speak at home? It is likely QUEECHUA—different from the Peruvian Quechua, but from the same root. In the middle of this quaint, not to say pre-historic Andean scenery, there is also said to be a NASA observatory on Cotopaxi somewhere up high in the Andean mountains, a bit of post-history.

We passed the entrance of the Parque Nacional Sangay, which is the biggest park in Ecuador, covering four provinces. In addition, there is a park around Volcan Sangay, one of the volcanoes on the “Ruta de Volcans.” There is a second very large park I had gone through and around last February named Podocarpus after the tree found within it. Cotopaxi and its Parque Nacional covers two provinces.

I saw women in Andean costume with the lead ropes of a dozen sheep collared and struggling in front of her along the roadside—just too late to get the picture as the lens spent some moments protruding. I saw many places along the roadside, most often at the steep curves, where a blue stylized heart is painted on the roadway, often with multiple white lines drawn above it. There may be more than one heart painted on the pavement and there may be many lines on top of each heart. There are also smaller hearts painted on the shoulder of the pavement in other sites as well. Each heart represents a fatal accident that has occurred there. The number of white lines above the heart represents the number of lives lost. Those on the shoulder represent pedestrians struck and killed. It is easy to see how this might happen with the steep landscape and the runaway vehicles but also the same “Inter Americano” is the pathway of most conveniences for pedestrians by day or night and they are often leading or accompanied by non-cooperative livestock that can pull them into the roadway.

We drove through the village of Zhou where a freshly killed pig was hung up and ready for customers who primarily enjoy the juicy skin in various preparations. It is hard to see how

one could stop on the roadway to sample the first of the cuttings from such an intact pig without getting bumped off by traffic coming around the blind curve adjacent to this hanging pig.

In going along further in our eight hour 480 km drive, we came through an area called Palmira, which look like the sand hills of Nebraska or South Dakota. The only thing that grows there are short pines, which are said to be an invasive species that suck something out of the soil making it unfit to grow anything else, “desertifying” the area. Palmira is at 02° 01.23 S and 078° 44.22 W.

There is a Lake here, which has a story which sounds like a legend. The lake is tucked in along the mountains and is an idyllic landing spot for a duck. This is also the flyway across which the waterfowl fly. One specific type of duck makes a point of coming to visit the lake for a specific purpose. The name is Ozougoche—a name I saw printed on the backsides of tour buses. This duck must have a very long and happy life, and then flies over the Andes to come to dive into the lake and thereby commit suicide! The ducks do not recover from this one-way migration and no further explanation was available as to why. Maybe like the legend of the Eldorado in Colombia, the ducks may have found the perfect spot and want to end it all here!

At one point on the drive, a short-tailed wildcat ran across the road. A little later, there was a tundra-appearing grazing of sheep followed by an Andean costumed woman swathed in layers of wool under her felt hat, casually crossing the Panavial—the InterAmericano—the number one route linking the new world from top to bottom. I remember a book I read about an adventure travel when the Avalanche GM truck was launched that two fellows were going to set out to drive day and night across all borders and set the new record for driving from one end to the other of the Panavial—an exercise in bureaucracy when it came to border crossings.

There is an urban legend here about the Estrepro brothers, who were arrested by the police and then in police custody, were beaten to death. The police then threw their bodies into a lake. The mother of the brothers had been in school with Edgar Rodas Jr. The police brutality and cover up were exposed and she is now a lecturer on self-defense in an environment where you can be detected in trouble and councils screaming to attract attention from anyone nearby.

There is also a minor industry of “body packing” of the kind I remember from one experience at GWU in which a man had been admitted for bowel obstruction and renal failure and was found on x-ray to have odd-shaped foreign bodies in the gut. There were twenty three condoms packed with cocaine and one of them had ruptured, and he took his denial with him to the grave, having “no idea” how those things got in there when they were displayed after removal. A book and movie is made of one such young pregnant girl from Colombia called “Maria Lena de gracia” = “Mary, full of grace.” She apparently got to the US and survived after one of the coke packets ruptured and her story has been publicized.

THE OLDEST CHURCH IN ECUADOR: BALBANERO 15-08-1534

Right at the roadside is a church, sturdy and squat stone built building which is Balbanero, still in use as it approaches its five hundredth anniversary. I marked Balbanero at 01* 42.48 S and 078* 45.59 W at 3,187 meters. This was before even the first founding of Quito, the capital.

I was told that I must make an excursion at some time to Navarro five hours north of Quito to see what sounds like topiary sculpture of bushes carved to look like Venus de Milo, etc. I had wanted to go to the interesting part outside Quito where the scientific expedition had come to make the measure of the meter and give the nation its name subsequently. There is another event of note here called the “Ruta Zero” which is a bicycle race around the foot of Chimborazo. There are also pretty mountains adjacent to both Cotopaxi (one named Antessana SP?) and Chimborazo. As I have been fond of telling people for some time before ever seeing the mountain, Chimborazo is the tallest mountain on earth when measured from the center of the earth because of the global beltline bulge.

We are going to the North Slope of Cotopaxi, as there is also a South approach, but it is technical and a favorite of Fabio Zuarito who had a hand in making a base camp there. We talked a bit about books and climbing, one is Vertical Limit about K-2 and “Touching the Void” which I had read but is now also a movie. The latter is about a mountain nearby which is “Altan”, at one time the highest mountain in the world at 77,000 meters but it blew off its head in pre-history so that it is now 5,200 meters in a rim of 18 peaks around what residual of its grand size still exists. Cotopaxi, our target, is 5,897 meters and Chimborazo is 6,310 meters, each, like the Himalayas, still growing.

LATACUNGA: OUR BASE FOR RENTALS AND FINAL TOWN

We at last arrive at our target village, Latacunga. LATA= 00* 55.13 S and 078* 38.15 W at 2,724 meters. We stopped at an equipment rental store advertising the Ruta des Volcans and photos of prior expeditions. I said I would rent the equipment for both of us but they had no concept of checks or credit cards, and wanted my passport as well. After I gave them my card, they said it would be just fine for me to give them the one hundred dollar bill I had tucked into my backpack. There was a town square at the church with an open market next to it. It was interesting to me since there were mixtures of people wearing Andean costumes and the felt hats next to young girls in tight fitting sports costumes vamping all the on-lookers, including the puzzled local Andean types.

We went to lunch in a Latacunga restaurant with a limited number of tables for what is a full course dinner starting with a soup and a juice. As we sat, a group of typical Ecuadorian troubadours came in and sang like mariachis as our buskers for lunch entertainment, then they left

to go down the street for other audiences. We were seated when a few other customers came in and with only perfunctory greetings, sat in the two chairs at our table to join in.

The weather was alternately sunny and bright, and with quick rain showers which came up in a minute. We now had crampons for ice climbing with ice axes and sleeping bags and Paulo also rented a snow pants and parka with mittens. We were now ready to drive the bumpy winding approach road in the parque Nacional Cotopaxi.

A SERIOUS MOUNTAIN—COTOPAXI, ON THE “RUTA DES VOLCANS”—5,897 meters—an “EQUATORIAL GLACIER!”

And here we are, at the windswept parking area about three hundred vertical meters down from the Refugio we can see above us on the soft scree slopes which are crowned by the cloud-wreathed peak of Cotopaxi. We arrived at the place to chock our wheels with rocks on the slope at 00° 39.68 S and 078° 27.67 W at 4,474 meters, leaving me breathless in hauling stuff out of the car to carry up to the Refugio!

It did not take long for the first camera failure. I have my hands full and have the boots banking against my knees as I struggle to carry the rest of the equipment through soft volcanic ash—three steps forward, two sliding steps down—just like Kilimanjaro in almost the identical global position. Imagine this: An EQUATORIAL GLACIER! This concept is like a Zen Koan! I raise my Nikon damaged in the prior Burma jungles, and ---nothing happens. It is a good thing I pack photographic back-up. The machinery is more sensitive to cold blowing wind and fine volcanic ash than the human body is, but both will break down with abuse!

As we go up the scree slope, Paulo is ahead of me. I do not notice he is in awe of someone passing in the other direction. It turned out to be Ivan Vallarjo, the only Ecuadorian summitter of all fourteen eight thousand meter peaks on earth (all of which are Himalayan) and the author of the “Mi Propria Everest” that I will try to get for Paulo. Who else? That is, who else would be struggling up this soft scree to get to the Refugio—a cold shelter built at 4,810 meters and named for the padre Jose F. Rivas (S. J.) where we will be for the next few hours before our midnight assault from this Refugio.

BASE= 00° 37.66 S and 078° 26.94 W and at 4,810 meters

AAMC= 2,748 mi @ 02°

BWIA= 2,751 mi @ 02°

CUEN= 163 mi @ 193°

REFUGIO JOSE F. RIVAS, 4,810 meters BASE CAMP

This is NOT a stroll. Not even a hike! This is a mountain, and a big and near perfect one at that. It is quite high for a fellow who had the Pacific sea level lapping at his feet two days ago. The “Delta” is about as pyramidal as the mountain. If I had my oximeter here, I probably would not use it. It is cold and breathless just moving about the Refugio which has a few tables and a commons for a kitchen and an upstairs with bunk beds, a serviceable spot for those coming down or going up. I remember being in Kibo Hut on Kilimanjaro thinking that we were supposed to do two things---eat and sleep—and hurry up about both, since at midnight we have to be geared up and on the move. At that time in Kobo Hut the last camp before the Kilimanjaro summit, no one could do either. There is no interest in eating despite the hollow hunger and giddy sensation as “air hunger” has replaced calories. And no one sleeps when their adrenals are squeezed.

We had told short stories in a staccato sentence structure at Kibo Hut and I remember never having had a better audience. They were all wide awake and each laughed uproariously at every little joke I made. Now that I think of it, they also laughed uproariously when neither I nor anyone else was making jokes. In fact, the whole group exhibited behavior I would have called hebephrenic if it had transpired at a level where it was easier to respire.

The war stories we told were of prior mountains –I like to call mine (as I did on my old web site—“The Mountains in my Life and My Life in the Mountains.” Much of what is exchanged seems to be black humor, of the variety “Joe cut the rope on which I was dangling--- but then, again, I would have too!” (See “Touching the Void.”) I remember on the Everest Route above Pherche and around Kala Patar a bit of sucking wind, which seems to be unsatisfying, reaching the tipping point at which the work of breathing becomes more of a consumption than a positive gain in oxygen. I DID have my oximeter with me there and also a heart rate monitor, and I did not want to see it then either since one is about maxed out at rest. If you have not done anything strenuous yet—such as try to put on a boot, much less a crampon—and you are already in negative balance, the act of re-zipping a parka can take some thought and planning for the ten minutes you consider might be worth investing in it.

Now, here I was at the Rivas Refugio and I was surrounded by a group of people who were from one half to one third my age, and I was the least worried looking one. There was a German blonde girl named Sabina who had come up to the Refugio as her own High {Point—this was her summit, as she knew, she said, tucking fetching long blonde hair under her knit Peruvian wool cap, she never could go any further. There was a young couple from Switzerland and they were talking about how they had been up a few of the Alps but on the funicular cog rail. Oh, I forgot some heavily snow suited fellows who were in the kitchen in the very long wait it takes for water to boil here—at a temperature hardly hot enough to kill insects let alone bacteria or spores (that, after all, is how Alexander Humboldt determined the elevations on Chimborazo by stopping to boil water and noting the successively lower temperatures as he ascended—the same mechanisms as my own Himalayan National Geographic watch/altimeter on my wrist right now.) Humboldt almost did not return, and did miss a few digits from the frost bite. These non-

worried fellows who had been hiding in the kitchen with their jump suits unzipped turned out to be paid guides, who would, for an increase in fee, “short rope” a client to the top of anywhere.

Paulo and I made some gesture toward eating, and had “warmed water” after waiting too long to see if it might finally boil, to prepare a bit of pasta. We ate without enthusiasm as the blonde German girl asked me about other mountains; that was smart since I knew nothing about this one as yet.

Paulo had an idea and set about doing it with a white tee shirt. He inscribed it with a message to his girlfriend, hoping to display it on the summit, then remembering the only device he had being his camera-phone, I offered him my back up camera number Two—remember that the first had failed on the ascent to the Refugio. So, after he made his inscription in Spanish, I suggested two more. I knew we would not be barehandedly printing in a ballpoint pen on cloth at anything like uncontrolled circumstances above so it had to be now or never, so why not. We printed “Gifts from the Poor” above a second inscription “Mission To Heal”. In the event that we did not remember it or it was too much effort to get a camera out of the pocket in which it was presumed to stay warm enough for the batteries, we had our photos taken in the Refugio by the German girl and the Swiss couple. I then had a better idea appropriate to the mission I am on instead of the next ones in the future. We inscribed “Fundacion CinterAndes” and with a second pen I had for my postcards I had just bought when paying the bills of the Refugio after we had registered in, Paulo drew a portrait of the Isuzu truck with CinterAndes name and logo on the side and Gonzalo at the wheel waving to us in the cartoon on the shirt. I hope it shows up when it is hoisted on the ice axe, but in the event that it does not, the Swiss couple, long suffering in their patience, photoed us again with the CinterAndes “flag.” Now, if only I also had the NGS or Explorers’ Club flags with me as well!

**MIDNIGHT ARISING FROM A FREEZING BUNK WITH AN
INADEQUATE SLEEPING BAG AFTER SLEEPLESS SHIVERING FOR
FOUR HOURS TO EMERGE IN ELECTRIC MOONLIGHT OF A FULL
MOON ILLUMINATING THE HOVERING SUMMIT, WITH THE
DISTANT LIGHTS OF QUITO FAR BELOW**

My fingertips are numb, and not tingling. I was so cold in the summer weight sleeping bag that I was shivering all the time we were there on the bunks, from about eight o’clock to midnight. I got out my hunting gloves of Gore-Tex and added the running gloves as liners and I still did not recover sensation in the fingers. It was a sacrifice to pull out the gloves since I had been planning to use them to be my pillow, and now my head was on the hard board of the bunk. I do not think you are possibly pitying me quite enough by now, so I will add that I had no sensation in my feet, since I was not about to wear my boots in the bag.

I did not hear too much from Paulo so he may actually have slept a couple of hours. I know the young German woman did not, since she told me she was coming from Frankfurt and the Swiss couple from Luzon, and they would remember this moment when they were back at home. Edgar had called as we had left the town of Latacunga to ask us to call him from the summit. I must have great faith in technology, but I also would guess that there are rather sparse populations of cell towers near the summit. If there were, this could less likely be called mountaineering. At the moment I would be happy to board the funicular cog railway to make a Swiss-type climb of it.

Midnight arrived, none too soon since there was no point in using up the calories in shivering when I might need them for other purposes with heat as a mere byproduct. I was a bit headachy and wanted to raise my head up so it was not a dependent log on the boards, figuring it would all be different if I could regain the upright posture. There you go again, showing insufficient compassion at this interval in the middle of the night!

A SCREE SLOPE LIKE RED FLOUR HAS US BACKSLIDING FOR THE FIRST TWO HOURS BEFORE ROPING UP AT THE FOOT OF THE GLACIER AND ARDUOUSLY PUTTING ON CRAMPONS, TO SEE HEADLAMPS ON THE SLOPES ABOVE

There probably could not have been a better night for it. It was eerie and electric under a full moon. The cold light of the full moon illuminated the distant summit in a gleaming beacon and a long way below and far away an orange glow of the lights of Quito could be seen. The adjacent peak of Antesana actually cast a moon shadow. It was cold and all the gear creaked in a stiff cast of where it had been in the night, like putting the horse tack onto a horse in the elk hunts in the high Rockies in the freezing mornings before any of the leather warms up to be supple enough to conform to its function, when it must all be re-done as it loosens.

There was a skim of ice at a puddle near the Refugio probably from melt water from the day. I thought this was neat and would crack it with my boot as I did when I was a kid on the long walk home from school in Michigan when I could crunch the ice with the water running beneath it in spring thaw. I stood on it, and the ice held my weight—no mere skim this. There were climbers in muffled conversations in mainly Germanic sounding murmurs in pairs or threes getting started as Paulo and I got the last of our gear together and I had hoisted my new REI-bought Osprey 65 liter backpack. It was surprisingly comfortable and balanced. For the rest, I was—as I always say before an endurance run or climb—“if you are comfortable at the start, you are overdressed!” No danger of that here, since I was wearing my summer zip-offs, which I might have converted to shorts if needed—NOT. I wore my Antarctic Marathon windbreaker jacket, for which the only thing appropriate was the logo, of penguins on an ice floe. I wore my brand newly achieved Parks Half Marathon knot cap. And off we went under my Petzel headlamp.

It was eerie and mystical. In the cold light we could look up and see this massive mountain with only the top glowing in illumined ice. In the foreground we could see isolated white dots, with little cones like comets pointing in one direction or the other depending on which direction the climbers were headed in a giant Z-staircase. There was no handrail on this staircase; in fact, I could see no evidence of a trail. There was none, and if there were any vegetation anywhere, I might have called our route “bushwhacking” minus, of course, the bushes.

The surface at first felt like rock, then turned to dust, more specifically flour. In my clumsy climbing on Babadog the Great Caucasus, I stumbled along on the broken scree continuously depending for life itself on a stout climbing stick which should be used to arrest your fall if as will happen hourly, you slip and cascade down n a shower of shale.

On the descent from Kilimanjaro, I got mired in the powdery volcanic ash and would have to “ski powder” on descent, with the exception that snow powder melts when it gets into your nasal passages as you are breathing hard.

On Everest, the massive size the towering blocks of the huge Kumbu Ice Fall is intimidating enough just standing near them as they lean on what appears to be a precarious angle.

Yep, we had them all, right here. The soft scree came first, with the old “three steps forward, slide two steps back” being the annoyance of the starting climb. When there was something more substantial under foot it was a shale like rock which would slither like roller bearings. And then we encountered something different—ice.

Jon Krakauer describes the sound of good ice or rotten ice when it is struck with the ice axe. What I heard was definitely “good ice” which means I am on a sharply angled slope with the pick end opposite the adze stuck in solid ice, but that does not change the fact that I am on a steep ice slope which should make for a rather good lubricant to a rapid descent if something lets go.

We had roped up at the foot of the glacier about two hours in. It was approximately two thirty AM and I had to turn around to face downslope to get my kit and the pesky crampons which I had tied to the outside of my Osprey pack. Now crampons are inventions of the devil with a sole purpose. Their job, which they do so well, is to seek out and destroy anything they can find in the inside of a pack, and when they have finished with that, they start to work on the pack itself. They especially like Nalgene water bottles which is why mine was suspended around my shoulder on the outside in its insulated carrier. Insulation notwithstanding, the neck of it froze into an ice plug when I finally opened it to see if I could swig a bit as I waited while others used the perch to put on their crampons.

When I started to assemble the crampons, the long slow motion process which ALWAYS happens on a mountain—after all neither fingers nor zippers work, and these things are designed to require high tension in spring loaded deviltry aiming a series of shark’s teeth steel into everything around it—the first victim today being the bottom of my zip-off pants, and the next being my gators. The final blow comes when I realize that the one crampon is supposed to be bolted in the middle junction but the bolt is missing. Paulo looked it over even as he was struggling with his and without hesitation he gave me his crampons and used the one good one from the pair and stuffed the non-functioning one inside his pack. That would mean he would be doing the rest of the climb with only one secure foot. This has implications for self-arrest, and for team-arrest in the pair roped together.

I had an easier time of it than he, as we were roped up in our next ascent, on a pitch hugging close to the ice and the reliable sound of the “chunk” as I slammed the ice axe’s pick into a thick ice wall. Paulo stuck on crampon toe in and finessed the other boot. Both of us would be bruised later on the anterior shins at the point the lining of the climbing boot would be digging at us from this wall climb. Those familiar with ski boots will recognize this unique lesion as distinct from a twisted ankle which would be more likely without the stiff boot.

We were making good time and had actually “lapped a pair and then a trio of roped climbers as we kept going up. I would see a crest ahead and realize that I might stop to blow when I got to that crest of a shelf above. Somehow such resting pints never materialized, and there were simply “Mountains Beyond Mountains” to not coin a phrase. I would pause on the rope and Paulo would see that I was blowing off lactic acid in a brief hyperventilation and then we would crawl up further. We did this for another hour plus, and came to a slope with an overhanging shelf.

The one thing the shelf did not protect us from was the one constant companion we had all the way—a stiff bitterly cold cross wind. At one point I tried to half rise and was blown off my feet—in crampons. It never got to an ice axe arrest since I did the “tripod” and got back up and going, but each such little “incident” causes a great deal of air hunger and costs time in re-breathing a lot to catch back up. I had not taken gum or my unusual “Yak Cheese” when I am in the Himalaya, since it is always the case that the upper airway desiccates from all the high volume ventilation of super dry air. So actual membranes form on the upper airway’s casts, and they are the cause of some serious airway obstruction in the “Kumbu Cough.” I try to prevent that with gum -or something that keeps the saliva flowing to moisturize even a little, but I was having to stop to make deep full tidal volumes on the pitch.

We encountered three people at the overhanging edge who were talking about something I had spotted and actually stuck my head in to see what it was. There was an ice cave—a snowy entrance to a hollow in the mountainside that looked like it was barely big enough for a man to enter, looking precisely like a bear’s den entrance. When I stuck my head in with the headlamp illumining the interior I got quite a surprise. It was spacious and opened up into cavernous ice

crevasses with stalagmites and ties of ice sickles. I thought for a moment it would be a good place to escape from the wind, but the tug on the rope meant I was holding Paulo so I trudged up slope.

The trio of German speakers was saying something about not going any farther and one of them was a woman. After hearing that there was no way she could stop here, they suggested they all go back, and to make it safer, they might try to return to the area I had just seen and hide in the ice cave until it got light so they could descend in ropes. At least they would not be at risk for chilling out since they would be all wet in the cold wind here and could rest in the wind shadow of the cave.

I asked Paulo how far it was and how long it would take to reach the summit which appeared to be closing in as the cone got narrower and steeper as we ascended. He said not very, very far—perhaps three hundred meters in vertical distance, but it would take over three hours. I said “I think I have just three hours in me, but then you would have to carry me down; if I want to use those three hours for both up and down, I had better sit out the wind in the ice cave.” He said he would go back with me. No. I wanted him to summit and hold up the flags, and passed him my camera so he could record the caldera. I was honorably high up on the mountain and I had just spotted something of interest I would like to explore and he could make a solo ascent faster now and join me at the ice cave. I was also thinking of my cotton pants perforated by the crampons, and I would want to put on the wind resistant Gore-Tex suit I had in my pack, but could not do so over crampons and would have to take them off and put them back on an operation that would take more time than frostbite allows in a bitter crosswind on a glacier.

This was not a bad plan, and we each acknowledged that is what we would do so there would be no second guessing about one of us looking for the other if one were late or go in search on a mountain to see where someone might be—a very large and unforgiving haystack. So, Paulo went on with my camera and the “flag” and I climbed a bit more to see the direction the sun would rise when it did, and at 4:30 AM we went in opposite directions. I reached this snow cave and crawled in, to find the other three climbers there in either sullen or not understanding silence, until a few minutes later they picked up and started down as the first pink tinge in the east was visible. I spent all that time and more struggling to get out of my crampons and into the Gore-Tex without ruining either. I then broke a hole in the ice plug in my Nalgene bottle and had a chilled bit of Gatorade. I then poked my head out of the cave entrance like a giant brown bear at the end of hibernation and saw a spectacular sight.

Dawn in the Andes with sparkling sun filtered through ice crystals and shadowing the ice fall beneath me which looked menacing enough, that I instinctively put the ice axe into a bollard and held on as I pulled out my back-up Olympus and shot photos of dawn. At the time we had roped up I had even tried to shoot a video of us in the dark to show the distant lights of Quito and the looming tower of the Cotopaxi cone above us. I now shot the outside as the dawn broke, and then ducked back in to take a few pictures of the ice cairn and its chambers, now iridescent, as I

threaded back a bit into the crevasse. I was not the first, I realized, as I encountered a banana peel. I did not think that this was exactly where the bananas that I knew Ecuador produced from having passed hectare upon hectare of banana palms on the coast on return from the Palmar mission but it was another world encounter under the ice of the mountain. I half expected to be startled by the crunching sound of glacial movement which I have heard before as I once was camped on the “glacier in motion” in Alaska with my sons. I was more startled by the encounter with a banana peel in the interior of a crevasse than I would have been of the resounding crack of a glacier in motion since I was expecting one and not the other!

Of course, what else did I do? You guessed it!

CAVE= 00* 41.01 S and 078* 25.58 W at 5, 569 meters.

To get a mark on my cave and its impressively subtle entrance for such a subterranean (in this case, sub-glacial) cavernous expanse, I had to get outside to “see the satellites” for the GPS. When I did so, I stepped out on the frozen snow and crystals of the ice wind-whipped around the cave entrance. I was in my climbing boots without crampons since I had taken them off deliberately so as not to puncture my Gore-Tex suit. I could then sit in the ice cave without getting soaked from the body heat melting the ice—or freezing my tush, whichever came first. I was immediately aware of the instability of my stance on this slope since I had no crampons. And here was Paulo using only one since the other one was non functional and he had passed the pair along to me.

I SPOT A SMALL OPENING INTO AN “ICE CAVE” WHICH IS INVITINGLY OUT OF THE ICEY WIND, ENTERING INTO A VAULTED CREVASSE: 00* 41.01 S, 078* 28.58 W at Alt= 5,569 meters

I was alone in an ice cave in the glacier on the second highest Andean peak in Ecuador. I rather liked it. I thought this would be an interesting moment of observations in to my tape recorder, but like all things mechanical or technological on a mountain from the simplicity of a zipper to the complexity of a cell phone---“no functionando.” The recorder got cold or its batteries or a variety of other good and sufficient reasons for not working, and as everything else in my life like laptops or other critical needs, they fail most quickly and regularly when they are needed. The tape resumed function, of course, but only after the moment had gone.

But I ha many such moments to come since it took actually more than three hours for Paulo to get up to the caldera and rim it, for a couple of good shots of the caldera and his photos of the logo shirt for his girlfriend, CinterAndes for his father and “Gifts from the Poor” and Mission to Heal for the events of the autumn here for me. We did it again as we were joined up

again as we climbed and descended to meet and rope up with the added benefit of one of us in a PAIR of crampons for the security of a “tripod” on ice axe and crampon toes for group arrest. We needed it twice as Paulo slipped and the arrest worked well.

It was a long descent. It could have been very fast, and bumpy and quite dangerous. As the sun came up the “chunking” sound of the ice axe no longer revealed “good ice” and it proved itself such by pulling loose in cakes. We also had a couple of chances to glissade, especially since I was now wearing the Gore-Tex outfit which would have made for good tobogganing, with the ice axe as a rudder while roped, but it looked like there was no soft landing or shelving to our slope so we would have gone too far too fast.

Instead, we plodded down slowly. This time we could see, and what we had not seen at night were the large crevasses beneath our feet which we had crossed with an easy jump, now peering in we could see the blue green light of depths of slippery ice smoothed by meltwater, which seemed bottomless since the twist and graceful turns of the carved interior surfaces looked beautiful and thoroughly uninviting. It was a longer trek down than the exertion at night seemed to be. It always seems—astoundingly—better to be climbing than descending, and less treacherous. For one thing, descent has less anticipation and more weariness and a sensation of just getting over it, which can lead to shortcuts to disaster.

I was really ready for this to be over when we reached the soft scree and the powder ash. Now it was likely that with each step, the purchase beneath one’s feet would simply ball-bearing one down hill and even in a soft landing, it is very wearying to get up again, repeatedly. When we finally reached the Refugio which seemed to keep retreating I had made a plan on taking off my boots, climbing harness and how many layers and stack them in different piles to isolate the devilish crampons from chewing up the other parts and set off through the deep ash that leads from the Refugio to the parking area. I was exhausted—too exhausted to eat as was or suggestion for the return to Latacunga to turn in our rental gear and have lunch the same place. I had the soup and decided that was as much exertion as I would put out—like the “work of breathing” has a breakpoint for limited returns on increasing the rate; I did not think I needed the sustenance that would come at the cost of the effort to get it.

But I could rest, even nap, as Paulo had to do the whole drive back on the InterAmericano Panavial for 480 kms. I could be of no help since I did not know where to turn. We retraced our steps in coming up –so you can simply go to that part and read my description backwards!

We arrived late tired and ready for a shower and a rest, as Paulo made a completely rational decision; “I think I will skip the dance demonstrations tonight!”

10-SEP-B-8

**RETURN OVERNIGHT FROM QUITO AFTER BARBECUE RECEPTION
BY THE RODAS FAMILY COMPOUND, THEN STORMY WEATHER
THROUGH ATL AND DCA TO RETURN TO RAINY DERWOOD AS
MAJOR TREES ARE CRASHING AS I AM UNPACKING AND
REGROUPING, AND PLAYING A DEADLY STALKING GAME WITH A
WILY WOODCHUCK, AS I SORT OUT 3,000 ECUADOR IMAGES**

September 27-29, 2010

I enjoyed a nearly full day at leisure with Edgar in Cuenca mainly at his home compound, where his family had put on a barbecue for me. I had got up slowly in the morning, not as late as Paulo who had even more reason for being stiff and sore. The Universidad de Azuay driver who had found Judy's coat with the phone in the pocket delivered it and we then drove to the old town square where she was touring the town from a classic hotel. She was not in but leaving in early afternoon so we dropped the coat and phone off with the receptionist.

The Spanish "founding fathers/urban planners" had established a church at each end of the city as they had thought of it, and the vista in each direction reveals the church steeples that framed the limits of the city. Now, the city has spread out into the areas which had once been commons, for grazing, so the city has sprawled outside their original plans of about two kilometers length of the street. Adjacent to the church is an old "drying out tank" which was a restful building around garden courtyards for alcoholics' rehabilitation. It was first condemned, and then given to the city as a renovation and preservation project, now an art gallery.

As we had driven to the city, several streets were blocked off since there is a road race, and also pedestrian malls. At one turnabout traffic rotary, Edgar began to laugh. I had once told him about my relationship with the family of Rodrigo Crespo Toral, and had told him what I had been told about the family: "they are quite prominent Ecuadorians who have spread out over the South American continent erecting monuments to each other."

As we circled the traffic roundabout, there is an imposing stature of Rodrigo Crespo Toral's father. As we got into the art gallery and looked around it, I spotted the name over the door lintel "Salon "Crespo T." We laughed again since that is another Crespo Toral since Rodrigo had fifteen brothers, at least one of whom I remembered was archbishop in La Paz Bolivia when I had met many of the family in Montevideo Uruguay under circumstances of a stressful post-op course that involved a complicated follow-up to a cholecystectomy. It is even more interesting since Edgar's full name would be Edgar Rodas Toral, and he has family on the other side which are the Crespos!

Later in the day when we strolled through the garden and admired the landscaping, he had explained this piece of my own history to the medical student who is the boyfriend of Angie, the older daughter of Felipe and Edgar's daughter who had invited us all to a barbecue lunch.

Angie is fourteen months older than Anna Marie who is a flying acrobat. She never walks when she can pirouette, and she can high kick well above her head. She had made a couple of facebook DVD's with her friends which she had shown to us. I also learned that in May there is a well-run road race here which is both a 10K and a 15K, named after the one Ecuadorian who had competed in the Olympics and came back with a medal. He was the only medalist and it was a gold medal at that. I asked for the event and I was told "marching." It is the translation of "speed walking" the wiggling walk that is almost comic.

Anna Marie had run the 10K and I decided that if I am here any time near that event, I must add that one to my collection of exotic runs. I already have two return trips planned as soon as April one for the Otovalo inaugural mission and one for the first time ever to do one on the Galapagos as soon as Edgar's cousin can get it re-roofed in the primitive facility that they have there on Isabella. We might sandwich those around the MMHOF events in Toledo.

I opened my own laptop and showed a bit of the photos from the February mission to Zumba and then started up on this mission which has accumulated three thousand photos which I must edit before I post them, but that is what I was planning to do upon return to Derwood. That is where I was headed on the Six forty five flight from Cuenca to Quito in time to catch the Delta overnight to ATL. I discovered that the flight had changed times, and was now earlier at 6:15 which I never would have made except it was late in taking off. I boarded it and then stayed out in the waiting area to recharge the laptop and catch up on the closing out details of this trip before going in to the security lunge, where I met Judy Sudmeier who was on the same flight as far as Atlanta with only a carry-on. She had had an early arrival so she had taken a taxi and tested out her new Spanish on a short tour of Quito.

When I arrived in ATL the weather was bumpy in the air and wet on the ground. The whole of the East Coast is apparently in a rainy day, and the air service from ATL to DCA was so bumpy that no service carts were allowed into the aisles, so I made it three flights in a row without food or drink. I napped if I could and arrived in a heavy DCA downpour which when I got up to Derwood---got worse.

DERWOOD DEER IN HEAVY RAIN AND A CRASH AS A GIATN COMES DOWN BEHIND THE HOUSE

I went out briefly to "pick up sticks" when it was just raining and not pouring, and as I was outside, a very large branch broke off and fell in front of me near the drive. As I stood there, a tremendous ponderous roar was heard right behind the house and a thud followed by silence. I went around to the backside to hear the stream roaring in flood mode, and then saw the expected

demise of one of my giants. The large oak tree behind my Game Room had toppled over pulling up its roots and crashed down snapping of four younger trees in the process of its final tumble. I took a few photos and then ducked back in as the rain began a virtual torrent.

As I ran I noted that the acorn crop is so large that the ground is literally covered, and with the heavy rain, thousands of the acorns were floating and bobbing along the driveway. It has been a bonanza year for white oak acorns and the squirrels and deer have been thick and fat. Dale Kramer stopped by just as the rain had lulled, and we swapped out the cards in the trail camera. He has been up in the tree stands several times and has never seen so many deer. He has been awaiting the big one, which he has seen a couple of times but it did not come closer. On the trail camera photos we saw the second biggest with the re-curved brow tines, and if he is in range he would be a wall-hanging trophy. But Dale did not see the one “clever game animal” I have been stalking.

ON THE PROWL AFTER THE WILY WOODCHUCK—UNTIL DUSK WHEN I GET AROUND A GLITCH TO TRY TO SPOIL HIS DAY

During the rains as I was trying to catch up after unpacking and setting up for the visitors that will be coming to Derwood all next week, I keep glancing out the windows at the rain soaked acorn-filled drive. On one pass I noticed a glimpse of a curious sight. A fat woodchuck, preening in the rain, was at the bend of the drive a distance away from the shed door in which he had chewed a new entrance hole, since I have been using a stack of rocks as a “woodchuck indicator” at the opening in the doors. I already had set up the rocks from their prior toppling and had already got out the screen from the upstairs window, but the woodchuck always checks this window first as it emerges, and will keep an eye on it if there is no screen in it.

I quickly ran up stairs and snatched the sub-sonic-loaded .22 and crawled under the handle that slowly cracks the window to open position. When I finally peered over the sill, the woodchuck had spotted this maneuver and fled back to the shed. I kept watching, and could not see him re-emerge.

I went about the business of laundry and other domestic duties, then glanced once and saw a face sticking through the newly chewed entry hole. I sneaked back to open downstairs windows and at that pint it was gone again.

I was still working on chores and trying to get to the mail and a few other leftovers as dusk arrived, earlier these days and especially early with the cloudy rainy day. As I walked by the downstairs window, I saw the brazen roly poly furball sitting up in the same place it had been earlier in the day when there was light. Now, he is right there, and I have the window open and the .22 ready to go. So, I squinted as he seemed unaware, and squeezed the trigger. And nothing happened. The .22 was jammed with the re-loaded round caught sideways in the chamber.

Making many statements that should not be recorded, I ran to the kitchen and tried to use a knife to unjam the chamber, and it did not work. I ran upstairs and got a hemostat with which I could finally grasp the bent round and remove it, then re-loaded the rifle and got things ready again—a total of ten minutes searching for tools. I then sneaked over to the window, and the groundhog was still there but moved to where I could not see him without the window in the way. I re-positioned the rifle and tried to see him in the twilight as a few scattered raindrops were pinging off the scope. I could barely make him out but let fly a shot. The woodchuck stumbled and slipped but then made his way back through the shed door's chewed entrance.

This contest has now gone on for about five generations of groundhog lives, and I am still being marauded! The stones are now stacked in each entrance, and I may have to resort to a trap which may work even when I am not there. It may be awkward to walk around with a rifle when guests are here all week, so that is the time I expect he will be prancing around in full glory!

FALLING LEAVES, CATCHING FLIGHTS, AND A REUNION IN MICHIGAN PRECEDING A REUNION IN DC AND DERWOOD

I am packing up after getting Derwood ready for many guests, who will begin arriving a day before I do! I will try to get as many details as possible fixed as I am arranging a slide show for the ACS, and editing out blog entries for the web page, planning to meet visitors in Michigan and Toledo who may be in DC as well as the Colorado gang for elk hunting plans. My application for Backwater Sika deer hunts has been approved. I am also getting close to the fall long running season for which my biggest prep perhaps has been climbing in both Andes and Rockies. We will see how many of these events and hunts can be pulled together—until I score yet another unique trophy---a fat woodchuck who has not been paying rent as a Derwood squatter!

10-SEP-B-9

JUDY SUDMEIER'S RESPONSE TO HER ECUADOR EXPERIENCE

Dear Glenn,

I am in Ecuador withdrawal! I thank you for opening the opportunity for me to discover the treasures in Ecuador. I enjoyed it immensely and will go back. I am already researching the medicine beliefs of the Ecuadorian people. I am working on a doctorate degree in Integrative Medicine which honors many different types of healing, so my study will fit perfectly.

I hope you got home safely and had money for the taxi. I understand there are watches that will automatically reset to the appropriate time zone. You might want to invest in one.

I am working on arranging flights to attend the mission conference at the University of Toledo in April. I will fly into Akron, visit my brother and drive to Toledo. Will it be possible to attend the honoring ceremony for Dr. Rodas? Let me know who I should I contact. I want to confirm the date of April 9.

God speed on your next journey. The adventure never ends! Hope to see you in Holyoke for pheasant hunting. If I must work that day, I will hook you up with one of the farmers. I refuse to cook the pheasant (assuming you would actually shoot one) but will treat you to our very best restaurant, The Skillet. I insist you stay at my home. You can even play with my organ (the wood one).

I will make this note brief as I now understand your attention span (smile).

Fondly,
Judy

PS I want to send a written thank you to you and Dr. Rodas. Do you have addresses?